

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SPECTRUM OF INFIDELITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN

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For many years infidelity has been a cancerous problem in African American relationships. However, the specific psychological etiology of infidelity regarding African American men needs more attention and scholarly investigation. The content of my research concentrates on the specific causes and the particular issues of infidelity and commitment in relation to African American men. The psychological theoretical frameworks used focuses on concepts of self-actualization, self-determination theory (SDT), and operant and classical conditioning in the investigation of the subject matter. These particular issues of infidelity are supported by the growing divorce rate in African American communities (43% of the national divorce rate), low marriage rates, and high statistics of non-marital child bearing.

This study focuses on an examination of the African American male psyche to interrogate why relational commitment is an obstacle and how it affects intraracial relationships between African American, as well as other non-romantic relationships. The methodologies used include: literature review, interviews, and data analysis. It is hoped that these three techniques provide significant evidence to support the validity of my hypothesis. The hypothesis of this study is that infidelity is one of the leading causes in relational issues such as trust and intimacy. For African American men, it is proposed that infidelity is incorporated into the developmental teachings and performances of Black masculinity. Within these training rituals, young men are encouraged to participate in relational infidelity with the intent of obtaining a certain level of status and power as proposed by the terms of ideal hegemonic masculinity. The implications of this hypothesis are that if the issue of infidelity continues to be encouraged within the terms of African American masculinity, then they may face a new type of internal marginalization, in which stereotypes such as deception and promiscuity will become the modern principals of Black masculinity instead of responsibility and leadership. Several contributing factors structure my hypothesis such as gender conflicts, societal/cultural expectations, and the formation and performances of Black masculinity. And all of these factors profoundly affect the various definitions, conceptions, and acts of infidelity.